

Open Studios tour starts this weekend

Artists hope to shed light, sell art

By **Mark Collins** For the Camera

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Since she moved to Boulder from New York City three years ago, Pattie Lee Becker has spent many days alone in her home studio. There, she toils away at both the business and creation of art.

But Becker, who creates fabric sculptures and colored-pencil drawings, will have some company this weekend and next. She is one of 130 local artists inviting the public into their studios during the 15th annual Open Studios tour, held



Diana W. Tripp, left, talks about her work with Deborah Schroeder, center, and Robin Gossard during the Open Studios Tour last year. Camera file photo. (CLIFF GRASSMICK)
Saturday, Sunday and Oct. 10 and 11 throughout Boulder County.

"I'm looking forward to (interacting with the public) because my practice is really solitary, as is most artists," Becker said. "I think it's a good time to be able to talk about your work."

That opportunity to communicate with patrons and viewers is one reason Patricia Chapman wanted to be part of the Open Studios tour this year, as well. Chapman makes assemblage and collage pieces out of found objects. She relocated to Boulder from Santa Fe last year.

"So much of why I make my art is to connect with people," Chapman said. "I'm basically telling narratives with my work, and I'm so gratified when people relate to the work, that they see part of their own story in the stories that I'm telling."

David Lurie and his wife, Melissa, enjoy telling guests at their home about their dining room furniture. The Luries have been regulars on the Open Studios tours the past five years, and David Lurie said the couple has bought pieces from eight different artists who they encountered on the tour.

That includes woodworker Harv Mastalir and metalsmith David Norrie, both of whom Lurie commissioned to build a dining room set after meeting the artists during Open Studios.

"We typically only eat at that dining room table when we have guests over," said Lurie, co-owner of Seth Ellis Chocolatier in Boulder. "So to be able to tell the story that we actually have a relationship with the two artists and had the opportunity to walk through the whole process with them (is special)."

The tour, which takes place during two weekends each fall, is free and open to the public. All proceeds from art purchased during the tour goes directly to the artists.

The Open Studios organization, however, makes most of its money from the 64-page tour guidebook, which costs \$12 and can be purchased at several area businesses. The guidebook features articles, artist profiles, photos of artists' pieces and maps to the artists' studios.

Where to start?

Potential viewers can get an idea of which artist studios they may want to visit by viewing pieces from all the Open Studios artists at an exhibition currently held at the Canyon Gallery in the Boulder Public Library.

Last year's tour drew between 5,000 and 6,000 individual visitors, who made an estimated 70,000 studio visits, according to Jane Saltzman, Open Studios executive director.

The fall tour isn't all there is to Open Studios, though, said Saltzman, who was named executive director of the not-for-profit organization in February. Open Studios has expanded in recent months. It now has an office and permanent gallery space in Rembrandt



Artist Pattie Lee Becker draws in her home studio in downtown Boulder. Becker is one of 130 artists participating in the Open Studios Tour this year. (KASIA BROUSSALIAN)
Yard, the gallery at the corner of 13th and Spruce streets.

"I really liked the idea of there being a year-round representation of Open Studios, so that in time it would no longer be thought of as just a single event in the fall," Saltzman said. "We are so much more than just a single event."

Open Studios also produces an art fair in the spring, and operates Clementine Studio, an art school for children. It also sponsors a program called Education Links, which brings professional artists into Boulder Valley School District Classrooms.

"It's great for (the students) to see a real artist, somebody who does art and makes a living doing it," said Molly Hoverstock, an art teacher at Casey Middle School in Boulder, whose students have received visits from Open Studios artists through the years.

Education moves beyond the classroom during the Open Studios tour. To kick things off, Open Studios is sponsoring a free panel discussion titled "Sound Investing: Investing in Local Art" at 10 a.m. Saturday at Rembrandt Yard.

"Local spending obviously is a huge movement in lots of areas," Saltzman said. "So we're taking that approach: If you stick with your local economy you're going to grow your local economy.

"Purchasing their artwork is bringing tax dollars into our local coffers, and its supporting individuals who enhance our community."

In addition, each of the 130 Open Studios artists will provide an educational component at their studio during the tour.

"Whether they do a demonstration or they have a poster that shows their process or they have a hands-on project that people participate in, they are required to do something along those lines," said M.J. McCoy, Open Studios manager.

Hoverstock is a regular on the tour, and the art teacher encourages her students to visit artist studios, too.

A chance to learn

"It's a user-friendly way to talk to artists," Hoverstock said. "There's nothing intimidating about it. Everybody knows it's set up so you can ask questions and chat with the artists.

"It's great to hear from the artists what they're trying to do. People interpret things so many different ways. People can still do that, but they can also hear what the artists were thinking when they made the art."

Chapman said she will have some works in progress and will talk about her assemblage process during the tour. Becker said she's planning to teach people how to make "peanut people," little fabric sculptures, as the educational element during her tour stop.

Both look forward to interacting with the public.

"A lot of people are intimidated by going to a museum, and overwhelmed especially by contemporary art and understanding what it's about," Becker said. "I think the Open Studios

gives people a chance to understand your work on a conceptual level -- they ask questions about it and you can explain it.

"And it also personalizes the work. That's a really nice aspect of Open Studios, or any chance the viewer gets to interact with the artist, or vice versa."

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